

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SEOUL 7958

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, PINS, KS

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS STRUGGLE TO HEAT UP IN FALL

REF: A) SEOUL 7429; B) SEOUL 7698

1. SUMMARY: DISSIDENTS SEEM DETERMINED TO STEP UP THEIR ATTACKS ON THE ROKG THIS FALL. WITH TENSIONS ON UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES AND THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTION CAMPAIGN TAKING SHAPE, THE DISSIDENTS WILL BE WORKING IN AN ENVIRONMENT WHICH PRESENTS THEM WITH SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY. THE ROK HAS SHOWN RESTRAINT IN HANDLING DISSIDENT CHALLENGES SO FAR THIS YEAR, BUT THE DISSIDENTS CONTINUE TO PROBE THE LIMITS OF THAT RESTRAINT. GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO THEM THIS FALL, THEY MAY CROSS THE BOUNDRIES OF WHAT THE ROKG IS WILLING TO TOLERATE. END SUMMARY.

2. IN REF B WE POINTED OUT POSSIBLE IMPACT OF DOMESTIC POLITICS AND STUDENT ACTIVISM ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES. FOLLOWING DISCUSSION PROVIDES GREATER DETAIL ON THIS POINT. ELECTIONS FOR THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, WHICH ARE EXPECTED TO TAKE PLACE IN DECEMBER, CONSTITUTE THE FINAL ACT IN LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR YUSIN II. DISSIDENTS TELL US THEY FEEL THAT THE MONTHS BETWEEN

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NOW AND THE END OF THE YEAR ARE THEIR LAST CHANCE TO THROW A MONKEY WRENCH INTO THE YUSIN MACHINERY BEFORE THE INAUGURATION OF PRESIDENT PARK TO SIC YEARS MORE AT THE HELM OF A GOVERNMENT DESIGNED TO WITHSTAND A HOST OF INTERNAL PRESSURES. FURTHERMORE, THEY BELIEVE THAT THE ELECTION CLIMATE WILL CREATE HEIGHTENED POLITICAL AWARENESS IN THE GENERAL

PUBLIC AND PRESENT THE ROKG WITH GREATER CONTROL PROBLEMS THAT WERE ASSOCIATED WITH THE NCU ELECTION.

3. ALTHOUGH THE DISSIDENTS HOPE TO CONTRIBUTE HEAVILY THEMSELVES TO THE EXPLOITATION OF THIS OPPORTUNITY, THEY PIN THEIR MAJOR HOPE FOR EFFECTIVE ACTION ON THE STUDENTS. THE RETURN OF THE STUDENTS TO CAMPUS HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN THE OCCASION FOR ANTICIPATION OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATIONS. THISYEAR DISSIDENTS FEEL STUDENT DISORDERS ARE A CERTAINTY AND THAT DEMONSTRATIONS WILL BE LARGE SCALE. THEY BELIEVE THAT THE SUCCESS OF THE TACTIC OF OFF-CAMPUS DEMONSTRATION, TRIED IN THE LAST DAYS OF THE SPRING TERM, HAS STIRRED THE ENTHUSIASM OF STUDENT LEADERS WHO ARE ANXIOUS TO TRY IT OUT AGAIN. STUDENT LEADERS CLAIM THAT, DESPITE THE ARRESTS AND EXPULSIONS IN THE AFTERMATH OF LASTYEAR'S DEMONSTRATIONS, THE RANKS OF STUDENT ACTIVISTS HAVE BEEN FILLED OUT BY NEW STUDENTS. THEY ARE COUNTING IN PARTICULAR ON THOSE WHO REJOINED THE UNIVERSITIES AFTER FINISHING THEIR MILITARY SERVICE, YOUNG MEN THEY CONSIDER ESPECIALLY ALIENATED WITH AUTHORITY OWING TO THEIR EXPERIENCES AS CONSCRIPTS.

4. SOME INSTITUTIONS RELATED TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT HAVE DIESGND SEPCIAL STUDENT PROGRAMS WHICH DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY (THROUGH ROKG REACTION) COULD ADD TO THE ATMOSPHERE OF CONFRONTATION. FOR EXAMPLE, THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SEOUL IS SPONSORING A CONFIDENTIAL

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WEEKLY SERIES OF LECTURES TO EXTEND THROUGHOUT THE TERM. THE SEMINARS WILL BE HELD IN THE MYONGDONG CATHEDRAL AND ARE OPEN TO ALL STUDENTS. ALL OF THE SEMINARS WILL BE MODERATED BY KO UN, AN EM-9 VIOLATOR, AND THE LIST OF LECTURERS INCLUDES TWO OTHER INTELLECTUALS WHO HAVE ACHIEVED PROMINENCE BEFORE THE YUSIN COURTS -- CHO TAE-IL AND PAEK NAK-CHONG. THE POLICE WILL SURELY WATCH CLOSELY THESE GATHERINGS OF STUDENTS WITH KNOWN CRITICS OF THE ROKG, IF ONLY TO ASSURE THAT THE MEETINGS DO NOT SERVE AS LAUNCHING PADS FOR DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE HEART OF DOWNTOWN SEOUL.

5. HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS ALSO BELIEVE THAT, AS A RESULT OF THE DEMONSTRATION IN CHONJU LAST AUGUST, THAT THEY MAY HAVE MADE A BREAKTHROUGH IN INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE -- OTHER THAN STUDENTS -- IN PROTEST ACTIVITY (SEE REFTTEL). WHILE STUDENTS WERE THE CRITICAL MASS OF THAT DEMONSTRATION, THEY CONSTITUTED ONLY 30 PERCENT OF THE GROUP WHICH FOUND ITSELF INVOLVED IN THE CONFRONTATION WITH POLICE. DISSIDENTS FEEL THAT SOME OF THESE YOUNG PEOPLE MAY TAKE THE SPIRIT OF PROTEST BACK TO THEIR COMMUNITIES AND PROVIDE BROAD SUPPORT FOR THE STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS THEY ARE

SURE WILL COME.

6. STATEMENTS BY DISSIDENTS RELATED TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS COALITION HAVE BECOME STEADILY BOLDER DURING THE COURSE OF THE YEAR AND HAVE NOW REACHED HIGH LEVELS OF STRIDENCY. DISSIDENTS HAVE ALSO BECME MORE AGGRESIVE IN THEIR TACTICS OF CONFRONTATION. FOR EXAMPLE, YU IN-TAE, WHO HAD BEEN RELEASED ON AUGUST 15, TOLD A CONGREGATION AT A PRAYER MEETING THAT HE WAS JUST A "JAILBIRD TRANSFERRED FROM THE KWANGJU PRISON TO THE GREATER PRISON THAT IS KOREA". THE KCIA PICKED HIM UP FOR QUESTIONING. REV. MUN IK-HWAN, A LEADER OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COALITION, ORGANIZED A PRAYER MEETING ON AUGUST 30 TO DEMAND HIS RELEASE. AFTER THE PRAYER MEETING ABOUT 60 OF THOSE
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ATTENDING RAISED PLACARDS AND MARCHED FROM THE CHURCH THROUGH THE AREA NEAR CITY HALL. THE NINE PLAINCLOTHESMEN WHO WERE SURVEILLING THE MEETING WERE BRUSHED ASIDE IN THEIR ATTEMPTS TO RESTRAIN THE GROUP UNTIL UNIFORMED REINFORCEMENTS JOINED THEM. POLICE DETAINED TWELVE OF THE DEMONSTRATORS INCLUDING REV. MUN. THE NEXT DAY YU IN-TAE WAS RELEASED. HE RETURNED HOME AND HIS HOUSE BECAME THE SCENE OF A RALLY FOR THE RELEASE OF THE TWELVE DETAINED THE NIGHT BEFORE.

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HOWEVER, ON AUGUST 31 THE POLICE FREED ALL BUT THREE OF THE TWELVE. THE THREE HELD WERE CHARGED WITH DISORDERLY CONDUCT AND SENT TO SUMMARY COURT (MAXIMUM POSSIBLE SENTENCE 29 DAYS). MANY OF THOSE RELEASED JOINED THE RALLY AT YU IN-TAE'S HOUSE PROTESTING THE DENTION OF THE THREE. IN SHORT, PROTEST MEETINGS HAVE BECOME CONTINUOUS OPERATIONS. IN THIS CASE, THE ROKG AGAIN ACTED WITH RESTRAINT AVOIDING APPLICATION OF EM-9 EVEN TO THE THREE HARD CORE DEMONSTRATORS. AGAIN THE POLICE ALSO MANAGED TO LIMIT THE PUBLIC IMPACT OF THE PROTESTORS' EFFORTS. THE DISSIDENTS CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE, IF NOT INCREASE, SUCH EFFORTS. WHETHER THE ROKG WILL REFRAIN FROM LOCKING THEM UP UNDER EM-9 REMAINS TO BE SEEN.

7. CHANCES THAT THE STUDENTS OR DISSIDENTS CAN MANAGE ANY MOVEMENT WHICH COULD FORCE THE ROKG TO MODIFY ITS STYLE OF GOVERNMENT ARE REMOTE, BUT THEY COULD CAUSE THE ROKG EMBARRASSMENT BEFORE WORLD OPINION AND SET BACK PROSPECTS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRESS IN THIS YEAR. THE STUDENTS CONSTITUTE THE GREATEST THREAT ON THIS SCORE, AND THE ROKG HAS WARNED, THROUGH THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS PREPARED TO CLOSE

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THE SCHOOLS FOR A YEAR OR TWO IF DISORDERS DEVELOP. AS FAR AS THE DISSIDENTS ARE CONCERNED, THE ROKG SEEMS TO REALIZE THAT THEY WOULD RATHER BE JAILED THAN BE IGNORED, SO THAT RESTRAINT IN HANDLING THEM IS A POLICY WHICH FRUSTRATES THEIR STRATEGY. RESTRAINT ALSO IMPORVES THE REGIME'S INTERNATIONAL IMAGE. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE ROKG SEES NO EVIDENCE THAT THE RELEASE OF PRISONERS HAS PACIFIED THE DISSIDENT COMMUNITY. INDEED, RELEASED PRISONERS SUCH AS MUN IK-HWAN HAVE TAKEN LEADING ROLES IN AGITATING AGAINST THE ROKG. THIS COULD MAKE THE ROKG RELUCTANT TO TURN MORE PRISONERS FREE UNTIL ELECTIONS ARE OVER, THE PRESIDENT IS INAUGURATED ONCE MORE, AND YUSIN II IS UNDER FULL SAIL.

8. COMMENT: WE EXPECT THAT STUDENTS WILL MAKE A NUMBER OF ATTEMPTS TO DEMONSTRATE, ESPECIALLY TOWARD THE END OF TERM IN NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER. OME OF THESE DEMONSTRATIONS MAY GET OFF CAMPUS AND BE LARGE ENOUGH TO ATTRACT INTER-NATIONAL PRESS ATTENTION. DISSIDENTS WILL BE VERY AGGRESSIVE IN EFFORTS TO EMBARRASS THE ROKG OR PROVOKE A CRACKDOWN. THE ROKG WILL STEP UP SRUVEILLANCE AND HARASSMENT TO FRUSTRATE LARGE SCALE INCIDENTS, BUT WILL LIKELY CONTINUE TO USE EM-9 ONLY AGAINST STUDENTS SEIZED IN DEMONSTRATIONS OR AGAINST ANYONE WHO DEFAMES THE

MILITARY OR PRESIDENT PARK PERSONALLY. IT WILL LIKELY
LIMIT PRISONER RELEASES UNTIL YEAR'S END. HOWEVER, IN
THE EVENT STUDENTS OR DISSIDENTS DO FIND A WAY TO
DISRUPT THE CLIMATE OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN OR THE
PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION, AN EVENTUALITY WHICH IS NOT
TOO LIKELY, THE ROKG COULD RESORT TO INCREASED APPLICATION
OF POLICE POWERS.
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